

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LUXEMB 00130 031057Z

22

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAJ-01 (ISO) W

----- 028322

R 031010Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4930

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION UN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUXEMBOURG 0130

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UN, LU

SUBJ: DOMESTIC REPERCUSSION OF THORN'S UNGA PRESIDENCY

SUMMARY: IN THE AFTERMATH OF HIS UNGA PERFORMANCE, PRIME MINISTER THORN'S PERSONAL POPULARITY AND POLITICAL PRESTIGE IN LUXEMBOURG ARE AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH. DURING HIS ABSENCES IN NEW YORK, HE STAYED IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH KEY MINISTERS HERE AND NEVER REALLY DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPORTANT GOL DECISIONS. THE DEMOCRATIC-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT COALITION IS NOW MORE THAN EVER DOMINATED BY THORN. WITH LUXEMBOURG ASSUMING THE EC PRESIDENCY IN JANUARY, THORN HAS NOT SLACKENED HIS PACE, AND HIS HEALTH IS REPORTEDLY SUBJECT TO SEVERE UPS AND DOWNS. HIS CLOSE COLLABORATORS SAY HE IS BOUNCY AND ENERGETIC ONE DAY AND EXTREMELY FATIGUED THE NEXT. THEY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LUXEMB 00130 031057Z

CONTEND, HOWEVER, THAT NOTHING IS SERIOUSLY AMISS THAT

A MONTH'S VACATION WON'T CURE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE LUXEMBOURG PRESS IS DOMINATED BY POLITICAL PARTIES OPPOSED TO OR DISTINCT FROM THORN'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND COVERAGE OF THORN'S UNGA PERFORMANCE WAS SPARSE. HOWEVER, EVEN THE OPPOSITION LUXEMBOURGER WORT FELT COMPELLED TO REPORT IN DETAIL ON THORN'S MEETINGS WITH WORLD LEADERS IN NEW YORK AND ON HIS WHITE HOUSE VISIT. THIS, PLUS EXTENSIVE TELEVISION COVERAGE, HAS CONSIDERABLY BOLSTERED THORN'S IMAGE AS AN INTERNATIONAL STATESMAN. ON THE ONE MAJOR CONTROVERSY THORN WAS INVOLVED IN, THE RACISM/ZIONISM POSITION. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ON HIS CURRENT POPULARITY, EXPERIENCED POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THORN'S PERSONAL AUDIENCE IS NOW AS LARGE AS THAT OF ANY POST-WAR LUXEMBOURG LEADER, INCLUDING JOSEF BECH AND PIERRE WERNER.

2. ALTHOUGH SOME DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS WERE FEARFUL LAST SUMMER THAT THORN'S FREQUENT ABSENCES IN NEW YORK WOULD PERMIT HIS SOCIALIST PARTNERS TO ENHANCE THEIR ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT AT HIS EXPENSE, THIS HAS NOT PROVED TO BE THE CASE. MEMBERS OF THORN'S ENTOURAGE TELL US THAT WHILE IN NEW YORK THE PRIME MINISTER WAS IN DAILY TOUCH BY TELEPHONE WITH KEY LUXEMBOURG MINISTERS AND KEPT A FIRM HAND ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REINS. GOL VICE PRESIDENT/FINANCE MINISTER AND SOCIALIST LEADER RAYMOND VOUEL ACKNOWLEDGED PRIVATELY THAT THORN CALLED MOST OF THE SHOTS IN DEVELOPING LUXEMBOURG'S PROGRAM TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT. VOUEL AND OTHER SOCIALISTS ARE WELL AWARE THAT THORN'S PRESTIGE AND POPULARITY MAKE HIM INDISPENSABLE AS COALITION LEADER; THE SOCIALISTS PARTICULARLY RECOGNIZE THEIR NEED FOR THE MOMENT TO HANG ON TO THORN'S COATTAILS IN THE WAKE OF THEIR LACKLUSTRE SHOWING IN THE OCTOBER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS (LUXEMBOURG A-44). CERTAINLY NEITHER VOUEL NOR ECONOMIC MINISTER MART NOR ANY OTHER GOL MINISTER WAS ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THORN'S ABSENCES TO STRENGTHEN SIGNIFICANTLY IS OWN POLITICAL POSITION OR IMAGE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LUXEMB 00130 031057Z

3. THE FACT THAT LUXEMBOURG IS IN THE MIDST OF ITS WORST ECONOMIC RECESSION SINCE THE 1930'S MAKES THORN'S CURRENT POPULARITY ALL THE MORE SURPRISING. ONE EXPLANATION RESTS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S SO FAR SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN FULL EMPLOYMENT THROUGH AN IMAGINATIVE PUBLIC WORKS SCHEME (SEE 75 LUXEMBOURG 0694). ANOTHER FACTOR IS THE CHRISTIAN-

SOCIAL OPPOSITION'S INABILITY TO COME UP WITH COHERENT ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS. OBVIOUSLY, THORN'S POPULARITY COULD DROP DRAMATICALLY IF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION DETERIORATES FURTHER, AND WITHOUT AN UPTURN IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY BY LATE SUMMER OR EARLY FALL, THE GOVERNMENT COALITION COULD BE SUBJECT TO SEVERE STRAINS. BUT AT THIS POINT THORN AND HIS GOVERNMENT STILL ENJOY THE CONFIDENCE OF A LARGE MAJORITY WHICH APPEARS TO GIVE THEM HIGH MARKS FOR A BEST POSSIBLE EFFORT UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. BARRING AN ECONOMIC DISASTER, THE COALITION GOVERNMENT WILL LIKELY REMAIN IN POWER UNTIL THE 1979 ELECTIONS, AND THORN WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY MAINTAIN FULL PERSONAL CONTROL OVER ALL ASPECTS OF GOL FOREIGN POLICY.

4. COMMENT: IN REGARD TO THORN'S HEALTH, IT IS TRUE THAT HE AT TIMES APPEARS HAGGERED AND RUN-DOWN. HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM, SUCH AS PAUL HELMINGER, HIS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, INSISTS THAT THIS MAY BE BECAUSE HE SIMPLY OVER-EXTENDED HIMSELF PHYSICALLY BY TRYING TO PRESIDE OVER THE UN, GOVERN LUXEMBOURG AND PREPARE FOR THE EC PRESIDENCY AT THE SAME TIME. THE EMBASSY'S UNEDUCATED GUESS IS THAT HE IS RECOVERING FROM SIMPLE EXHAUSTION BUT THAT HE IS NOT A SICK MAN. IN ANY CASE, HE IS GENERALLY VIGOROUS IN PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND CONTINUES ENERGETICALLY TO PURSUE HIS LOCAL, EC AND INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS. FARKAS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, POPULAR SUPPORT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LUXEMB00130
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-0877
From: LUXEMBOURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760288/aaaaczme.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <24 MAR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DOMESTIC REPERCUSSION OF THORN'S UNGA PRESIDENCY SUMMARY: IN THE AFTERMATH OF HIS UNGA PERFORMANCE, PRIME
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PORG, LU, UN, (THORN, GASTON)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006